ATLAS

MYSTERY TALES

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10¢

AUG.

"DON'T EVER GYP A GYPSY!"

AUTHORIZED A. C. M. P.

CONFORMS to the COMICS CODE

NO. 14

"LISTEN, YOU FOOL!"

"MARION'S MURDERER!"

"TODAY I AM A MAN!"

ON SALE MONTHLY

GET SET FOR A SIZZLING SESSION; AS WE BRING YOU OUR THIRD MYSTIFYING CHILLER! THE NEXT TIME YOU SHAKE HANDS WITH ONE OF YOUR FRIENDS, AND YOU FIND HIS TOUCH COLDER THAN A HUMAN BEING'S OUGHT TO BE, BEWARE! SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO PUT A PERMANENT CHILL ON YOU! THIS STORY WILL TELL YOU WHY!

TODAY I AM A MAN

IT WAS LIKE A NIGHTMARE! WHICH WAS MAN... WHICH WAS A MANUFACTURED REPLICA OF MAN, A SUB-MAN, AN ANDROID? THEN I'D HEAR ANOTHER QUESTION, A WHISPER, DEEP INSIDE ME..."WHAT AM I, MAN OR...?" AND THERE SEEMED NO ANSWER EXCEPT TO KILL... KILL...KILL!!!

BEWARE--- THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY CAN SOMETIMES LEAD TO MACABRE ANSWERS!

EVER SINCE THE 1970'S... BEFORE THAT EVEN..., THE WORLD'S BEEN LIKE A VAT OF YEAST... SEETHING, BUBBLING WITH HATRED AND MISTRUST...

SCIENTISTS AND DOCTORS NO LONGER TRY TO CURE MEN! INSTEAD, THEY LABOR, EACH SURROUNDED BY HIS OWN COUNTRY'S DEADLY SECRECY, TO FASHION FIENDISH RAYS AND CHEMICALS, TO KILL MEN...

EVERY DAY, ATTEMPTS ARE MADE TO ASSASSINATE MEN IN HIGH PLACES...THAT'S WHERE I COME IN... JIM CARTER, HEAD OF S.S. SECURITY! MY JOB IS TO PROTECT THE MEN AT OUR COUNTRY'S HELM...
LOOK OUT, SIR!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE GUARDS? THIS IS GETTING TO BE TOO MUCH! SOMETHING MUST BE DONE!
THESE TWO WON'T BOTHER YOU ANY MORE, SIR!
THAT AFTERNOON, I'M TAKING IT EASY IN MY APARTMENT, WHEN THE TELESCREEN POPS ON!
JAMES CARTER! YOU WILL PLEASE COME TO THE PRESIDENT'S CHAMBERS IMMEDIATELY FOR A SPECIAL MEETING!
MUST BE SOMETHING REAL HOT!
I HAVE TO PASS A DOZEN GUARDS, BOTH HUMAN AND ROBOT! SECURITY IS NO JOKE THESE DAYS!
I CARRY A GUN!
...PART OF YOUR JOB! O.K., YOU'RE CLEARED!
PASS ON!
ALL THE TOP MEN ARE THERE, WAITING FOR THE PRESIDENT! AL HUDSON TURNS, WAVES AT ME! HE'S A SCIENTIST, WORKING ON SOMETHING VERY HUSH-HUSH! I'VE KNOWN HIM FOR YEARS...
GENTLEMEN, THE PRESIDENT!
BE SEATED, GENTLEMEN!
I HEAR THE SUDDEN LAUGHTER... MY EYES TURN TO THE DOOR AGAIN, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE'S! THE PRESIDENT STANDS LAUGHING IN THE DOORWAY! THE PRESIDENT ALSO SITS AT HIS DESK! TWO PRESIDENTS! THAT'S WHEN I CURSE AND DRAW MY GUN!
MR. PRESIDENT
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IT'S ALL RIGHT, CARTER, PUT YOUR GUN AWAY!
I'LL PUT THE GUN AWAY WHEN I HEAR AN EXPLANATION, AND WHEN I KNOW WHICH ONE OF YOU IS THE PRESIDENT!
I AM THE PRESIDENT! THIS IS MY ANDROID! A MANUFACTURED MAN, MADE IN MY IMAGE! HE LOOKS, WALKS, TALKS, EVEN THINKS EXACTLY AS I DO... BUT I THINK DR. HUDSON CAN EXPLAIN IT BETTER THAN I... HE'S BEEN IN CHARGE OF THE PROJECT FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS!
YOU'VE ALL HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT ANDROIDS BEING MANUFACTURED... WELL, THE RUMORS WERE TRUE! PROFESSOR KRUG MADE THE FIRST SUB-MAN 20 YEARS AGO! AFTER HIS ASSASSINATION WE FAILED TO FIND HIS RECORDS, BUT WE CONTINUED WORK ON OUR OWN! NOW WE HAVE SUCCEEDED, WITH SYNTHETIC MATERIALS, IN BUILDING PERFECT HUMAN SERVICE!
BUT... FOR WHAT REASON?
TO PREVENT ASSASSINATION OF PEOPLE VALUABLE TO THE STATE! IN OUR SCIENTIFIC MAN-BUILDING VATS WE HAVE EXACT ANDROIDS OF EVERY LEADING STATESMAN, SCIENTIST, EVERY MAN OUR COUNTRY NEEDS IN THESE YEARS OF CRISIS! THESE ANDROIDS WILL TAKE THE PLACE OF THEIR HUMAN COUNTERPARTS AT ALL PUBLIC FUNCTIONS WHERE THERE IS DANGER OF ASSASSINATION!
THIS IS EXTRAORDINARY! HOW CAN WE BE RECOGNIZED FROM OUR ANDROIDS?
YOU CAN'T! THE ONLY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANY INDIVIDUAL AND HIS SUB-HUMAN COUNTERPART IS IN BODY TEMPERATURE! THE ANDROID'S IS BELOW NORMAL!
I DON'T LIKE IT, MR. PRESIDENT! IT... IT'S EERIE!
BUT IT'S PRACTICAL, CARTER! OUR ANDROIDS ARE PERFECTLY HARMLESS, ISN'T THAT SO, ANDROID?
QUITE! WE BUT EXIST TO SERVE!
THERE'S A LOT OF TALK! FINALLY THE MEETING BREAKS UP! I FALL IN STEP WITH AL HUDSON!
THIS SETUP MAKES THE HAIR STAND UP ON MY NECK!
RELAX, JIM! WE DON'T KNOW WHAT KRUG DID TO HIS ANDROIDS, BUT OURS HAVE A BUILT-IN INHIBITING FACTOR! THEY CAN'T GET OUT OF HAND!
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I GET JUMPY FROM THINKING ABOUT THOSE ANDROIDS... MY NERVES ARE ON EDGE, SO I WRANGLE MYSELF A COUPLE OF WEEKS VACATION! EVEN THAT DOESN'T HELP!
JIM DARLING, YOU'RE LATE... HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN OUR DATE?
FLO, HONEY, GIVE ME A RAIN-CHECK, WILL YOU? I'M EDGY TONIGHT... WOULDN'T BE GOOD COMPANY ANYHOW!

BY THE END OF THE FIRST WEEK, A FEELING OF DANGER GNAWS AT MY GUTS, LIKE A DOG WORRYING A BONE. I'VE GOT NO BASIS FOR IT, BUT I'M BECOMING MORE ANXIOUS BY THE HOUR!
I'M GOING TO SEE AL HUDSON! MAYBE ME CAN STRAIGHTEN ME OUT ON THIS DEAL BEFORE I'M READY FOR A PSYCHO LAB!

WHEN I GET TO THE LAB WHERE AL WORKS, THE FEELING OF DANGER IS SO STRONG I CAN SMELL IT!
THE STUFF THAT GOES ON IN THIS BUILDING IS TOP SECRET! YET, THERE ARE NO GUARDS! NEITHER THE ROBOTS NOR THE SEARCH BEAMS ARE WORKING... THE PLACE SEEMS DESERTED!

AL!

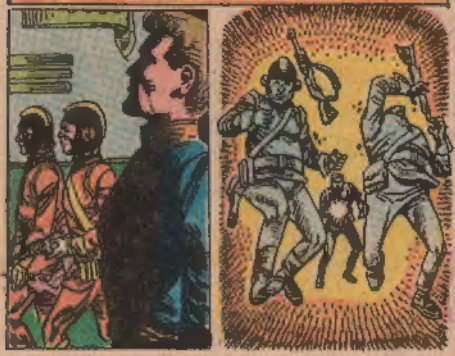
AL! I'LL GET A DOCTOR!
NO TIME... LISTEN... WE WENT TOO FAR WITH ANDROIDS... GAVE THEM BRAINS LIKE THEIR HUMAN IMAGES!... THEN THEY KNEW HOW TO MAKE OTHER ANDROIDS LIKE THEMSELVES! THEY'RE TAKING OVER... KILLING HUMAN COUNTERPARTS... PUTTING SELVES IN THEIR PLACES!

THEY FOUND KRUG'S FORMULA... TOOK ALL EQUIPMENT TO SECRET ANDROID LAB! MAKING MORE ANDROIDS... ONE THING... INHIBITING FACTOR MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO KILL ANYONE OTHER THAN THEIR OWN LIVING IMAGES! GOT TO BE STOPPED... THEY'LL TAKE OVER! FIND HIDDEN LAB... AGGHHHHH!

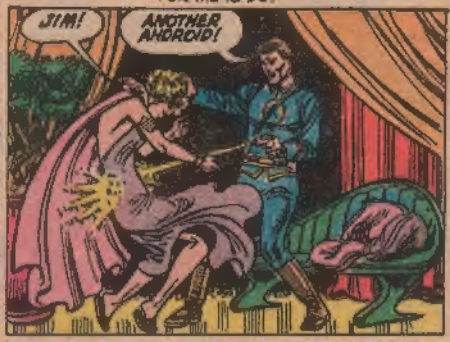
AL GOES LIMP! I LET HIS BODY SLIDE TO THE FLOOR! I'M SO SCARED I CAN SMELL MY OWN SWEAT! BUT THERE'S ONLY ONE THING IN MY MIND... ONE BIG THING...
THEY WON'T GET ME... THOSE MURDEROUS THINGS... THEY WON'T SUBSTITUTE ANY SYNTHETIC MAN FOR ME! I'LL BLAST THE FIRST ONE OF THOSE FISH-VEINED MONSTERS THAT COMES NEAR ME!

I GET OUT OF THAT PLACE FAST! AL'S WORDS KEEP RINGING IN MY MIND...
THEY'VE GOT TO BE STOPPED! I'LL GO SEE THE PRESIDENT!
VISITORS MUST HAVE PASSES CHECKED BY ALL MECHANICAL GUARDS
I GET PAST THE GUARDS...IT SEEMED TO TAKE YEARS! NOW I'M AT THE SECRETARY'S DESK, TOM CASSEL. I'M SHAKING LIKE A LEAF!
TOM, I'VE GOT TO SEE THE PRESIDENT! IT'S VERY URGENT!
BE CAREFUL, JIM! YOU'RE NERVOUS AS A CAT!
I BEND DOWN TO HELP HIM PICK UP THE PAPERS...MY HAND TOUCHES HIS...IT'S COLD...COLDER THAN A HUMAN'S OUGHT TO BE...
THE PRESIDENT ISN'T SEEING ANYONE TODAY, JIM...NOT EVEN YOU!
THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS THE ADROID'S BODILY TEMPERATURE IS BELOW A NORMAL HUMAN'S!
YOU'RE A DIRTY ANDROID!
CARTER! HAVE YOU GONE MAD?
GET BACK IN THAT ROOM, MR. PRESIDENT! BOLT THE DOORS AND WINDOWS! YOU'RE IN TERRIBLE DANGER!
MY HAND SLIPS...TOUCHES THE BACK OF HIS NECK...IT'S COLD...COLD!
YOU, TOO... AN ANDROID!
I RUN THEN...I BLAST MY WAY THROUGH THEM! THEY DON'T TRY TO HARM ME, JUST CAPTURE ME...AND AGAIN I REMEMBER AL HUDSON'S WORDS...
...THE INHIBITING FACTOR MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO KILL ANY-ONE OTHER THAN THEIR OWN LIVING IMAGES!...THAT'S WHY THEY CAN'T KILL ME! BUT IT WON'T BE LONG BEFORE THEY CHANGE THAT!

THE NEXT FEW DAYS ARE A NIGHTMARE! THEY HUNT ME DAY AND NIGHT...AND I HUNT THEM IN TURN...

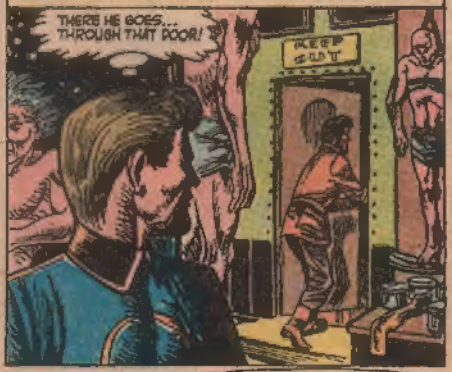


NO PLACE IS SAFE FOR ME! I GO TO FLO'S APARTMENT TO HIDE OUT... BUT WHEN I KISS HER, HER LIPS ARE COLD! THERE IS ONLY ONE THING FOR ME TO DO!



AND ALWAYS I SEARCH FOR THAT HIDDEN LAB...TO DESTROY THEM, I'VE GOT TO GET TO THEIR BASE WHERE THEY MAKE THEMSELVES...

I FOLLOW AL'S IMAGE! HOW CAN I DESCRIBE THAT PLACE. HE LEADS ME TO...THE HUMANS FLOATING IN SOLUTIONS IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION UNTIL THEIR ANDROIDS CAN TAKE THEIR PLACE! HOW CAN I MAKE YOU FEEL THE REVULSION THESE ANDROIDS FILL ME WITH!



I TIPTOE UP...OPEN THE DOOR! AL STANDS BEFORE A BED...THE FIGURE IN THE BED SITS UP! IT'S ME!

YOU'LL NEVER MAKE JIM CARTER AN ANDROID! THERE...I'VE KILLED IT!
YOU FOOL! YOU'VE JUST KILLED THE LIVING MODEL FOR THE FIRST ANDROID ...KELLIG'S ANDROID, WHICH WAS MADE WITHOUT THE INHIBITING FACTOR THAT KEEPS US FROM KILLING ANYONE BUT OUR OWN ORIGINAL HUMAN!

Stan Lee PRESENTS:

DON'T EVER GYP A GYPSY

I SEE MUCH EVIL IN YOUR HAND! AND THERE IS A QUESTION! YOU WANT TO KNOW SOMETHING VERY BADLY... WHAT IS IT?
YOU'RE PRETTY GOOD, MADAM ZARGA! I DO HAVE A QUESTION, AND I'M SURE YOU CAN ANSWER IT!
BEWARE... THE GYPSY'S HAUNTED GAZE!
C 69B

THEN OUT OF THE SHADOWS, STEPPED RITA'S PARTNER, SLADE CURRIN! SLADE KNEW HOW TO DEAL WITH OLD WOMEN...

NOBODY CALLED SLADE CURRIN FOOLISH AND LAUGHED IN HIS FACE... AND GOT AWAY WITH IT...
I'LL KILL YOU AND FIND THE MONEY MYSELF!
BANG! BANG!
SLADE FIRED UNTIL HIS GUN WAS EMPTY... AND STILL HE COULDN'T BELIEVE HIS EYES!
THE BULLETS WENT RIGHT THRU YOUR HEART! YOU'VE GOT TO BE DEAD!
NO, MY FRIEND! NOT WHEN YOU KNOW THE ANCIENT SECRET I KNOW!
BANG! BANG! CLICK!
THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY!
YOU'RE LYING! IT'S A TRICK! IT'S DONE WITH MIRRORS... OR SOMETHIN'!
IT IS? THEN WATCH THIS! COME HERE, SATAN, MY PET!
THE CAT BARELY TOUCHED THE LIQUID BEFORE IT SCREAMED ONCE... AND DROPPED DEAD!
AND NOW I SHALL DRINK FROM THE SAME BOTTLE!
NOW ARE YOU CONVINCED I KNOW THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY?
NO! LET'S TRY COLD STEEL ON YOUR PRECIOUS SECRET!
SNAP!
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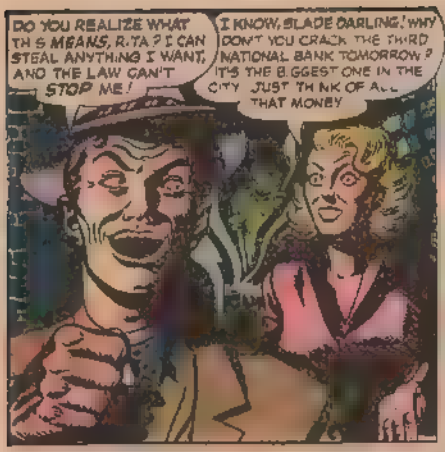
AND THEN SLADE CURRIN GOT THE SHOCK OF HIS LIFE!

YES! BUT THIS SECRET... I MUST HAVE IT, MADAM ZARGA! MAKE ME IMMORTAL... AND I'LL PAY YOU ANYTHING!
IT CAN BE DONE! BUT MY FEE IS ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS... CASH!

FOR THE NEXT FIVE DAYS SLADE CURRIN HARDLY RESTED! DAY AND NIGHT HE PROWLED THE STREETS... ROBBING, KILLING, AND DREAMING OF THE WONDERFUL SECRET HE WAS GOING TO BUY... THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY!

THEN ON THE FIFTH NIGHT...
THAT'S IT, BABY! THIS ROLL MAKES IT A HUNDRED THOUSAND BUCKS! HEAD FOR MADAM ZARGA'S!
CHECKS CASHED
AT MADAM ZARGA'S...
I'VE GOT THE MONEY! BUT I'M WARNING YOU... IF YOU DARE TO TRICK ME, I'LL FIND A WAY TO KILL YOU!
HAVE NO FEAR OF BEING CHEATED! I, TOO, HATE CHEATS! LET RITA DROP THE ENTIRE HUNDRED THOUSAND INTO THE CAULDRON! I WILL BEGIN!
THE ROOM WAS COLD AND STILL...
AS MADAM ZARGA STIRRED HER EVIL MIXTURE...
AND RITA POURED MONEY INTO IT...
TILL IT WAS BRIMMING FULL OF STOLEN BLOOD MONEY...
IN EXCHANGE FOR ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, SLADE CURRIN, YOU HAVE BOUGHT THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY!
YEAH? WELL, I DON'T FEEL A THING!
SUDDENLY A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT ENVELOPED SLADE CURRIN, AND MADAM ZARGA'S END OF THE BARGAIN WAS FILLED!
THE BARGAIN IS SEALED! DEATH HAS LOST ITS HOLD ON YOU FOREVER!
4


DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS, RITA? I CAN STEAL ANYTHING I WANT, AND THE LAW CAN'T STOP ME!
I KNOW, SLADE DARLING! WHY DON'T YOU CRACK THE THIRD NATIONAL BANK TOMORROW? IT'S THE BIGGEST ONE IN THE CITY. JUST THINK OF ALL THAT MONEY

AND SO THE NEXT DAY, SLADE CURRIN PUT HIS EVIL SECRET TO THE ACID TEST..

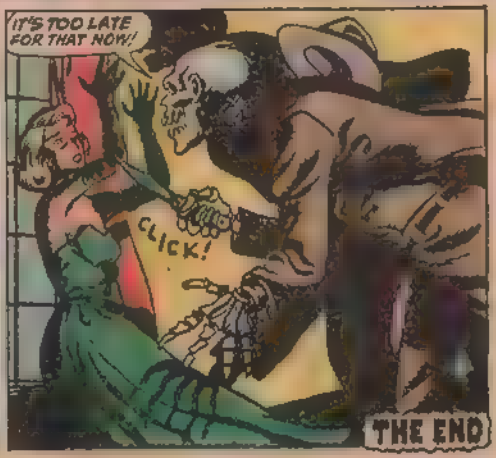
LATER, SLADE CALLED RITA FROM HIS HIDEOUT..

RITA, BABY! IT WORKED PERFECT! I GRABBED A FORTUNE! I'LL LAY LOW AND SEE YOU AT YOUR APARTMENT IN TWO WEEKS!
WHATEVER YOU SAY, DARLING! I'LL BE WAITIN'!

BUT ONLY TEN DAYS LATER, AS RITA ENTERED HER APARTMENT..

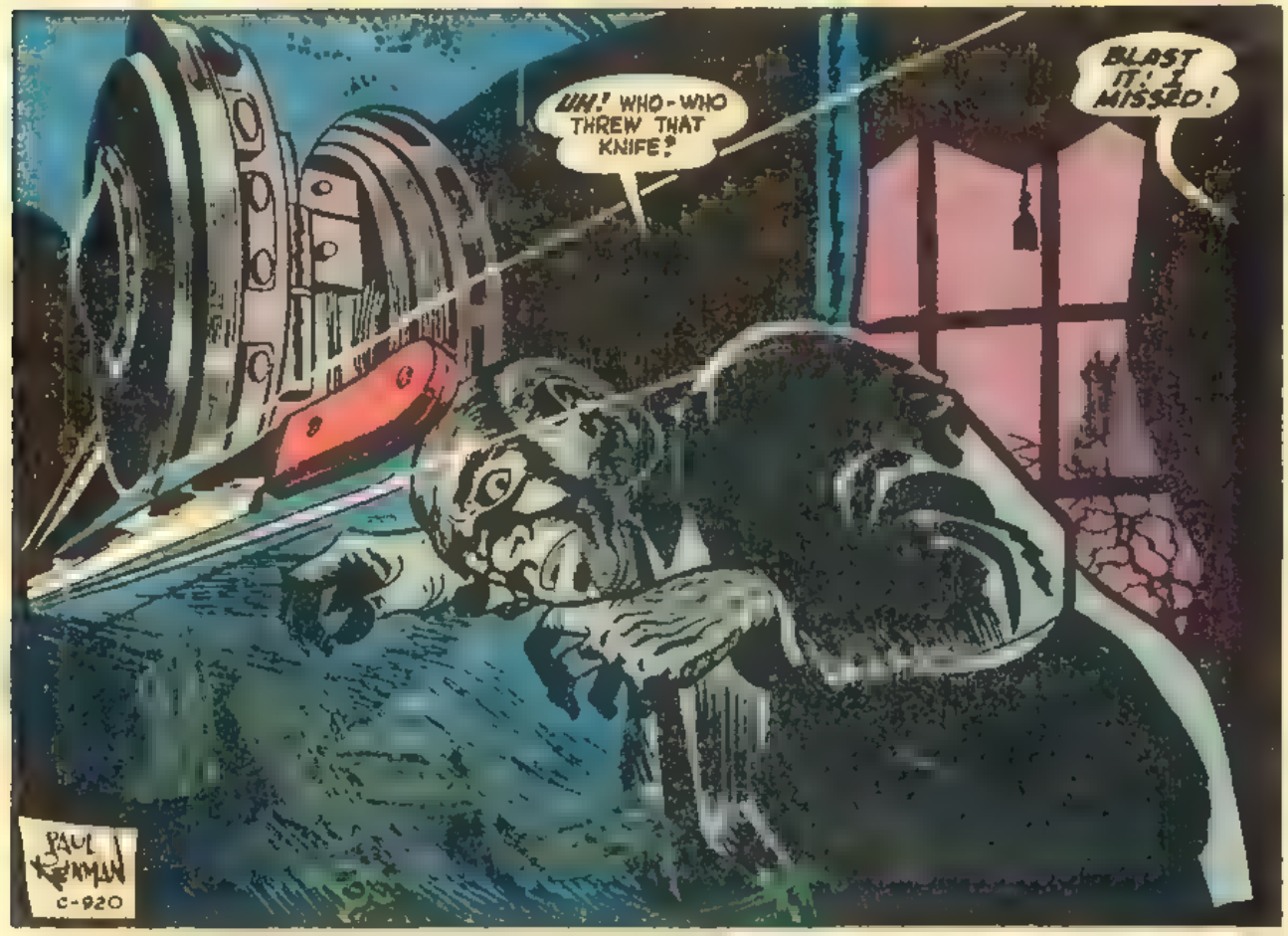
WHO'S THERE?
IT'S SLADE, RITA! YOU MADE A BAD MISTAKE, BABY. YOU HELD BACK FIFTY GRAND FROM THE GYPSY! YOU ONLY GAVE HER FIFTY THOUSAND... AND I KNOW IT.

OKAY, SLADE. SO I GYPPED THE OLD HAG! A GIRL LIKES NICE THINGS!
THE FIFTY GRAND YOU HELD BACK WAS PART OF THE BARGAIN! YOU MADE ME KEEP ONLY HALF OF MY BARGAIN WITH HER!

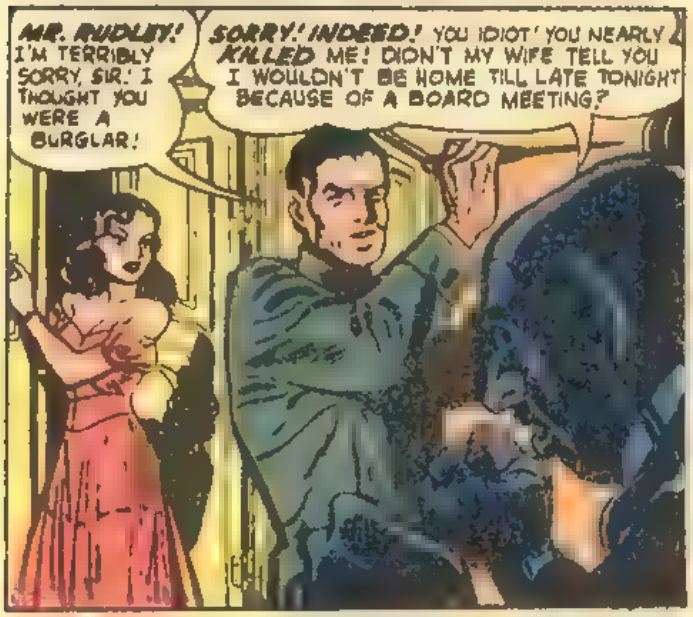


WHO SAID *HALF* A MAN IS BETTER THAN NONE? *RITA*, THE CHEATER, WOULD ARGUE THAT POINT WITH YOU! NOW TAKE THE CASE OF THIS WIFE WHO WANTED TO BE A WIDOW...DID *YOU* EVER WONDER HOW *MANY* DIFFERENT WAYS A MAN CAN DIE "ACCIDENTALLY"? *PLENTY*.. AND *LORNA* KNEW THEM ALL!

LISTEN, YOU FOOL

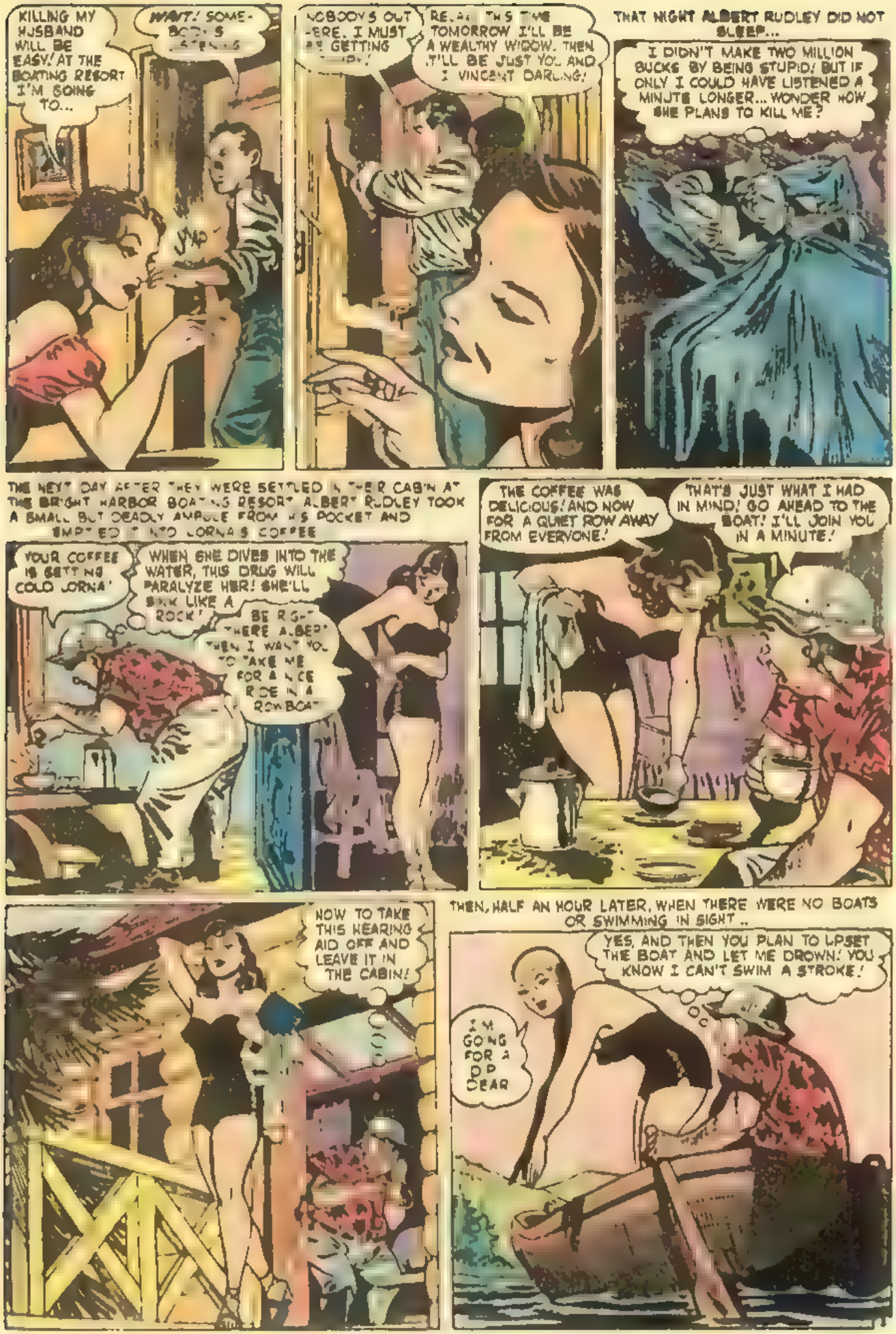


AS ALBERT RUDLEY'S WIFE, LORNA, FLICKED ON THE LIGHTS


MR. RUDLEY! I'M TERRIBLY SORRY, SIR! I THOUGHT YOU WERE A BURGLAR!
SORRY! INDEED! YOU IDIOT! YOU NEARLY *KILLED* ME! DIDN'T MY WIFE TELL YOU I WOULDN'T BE HOME TILL LATE TONIGHT BECAUSE OF A BOARD MEETING?

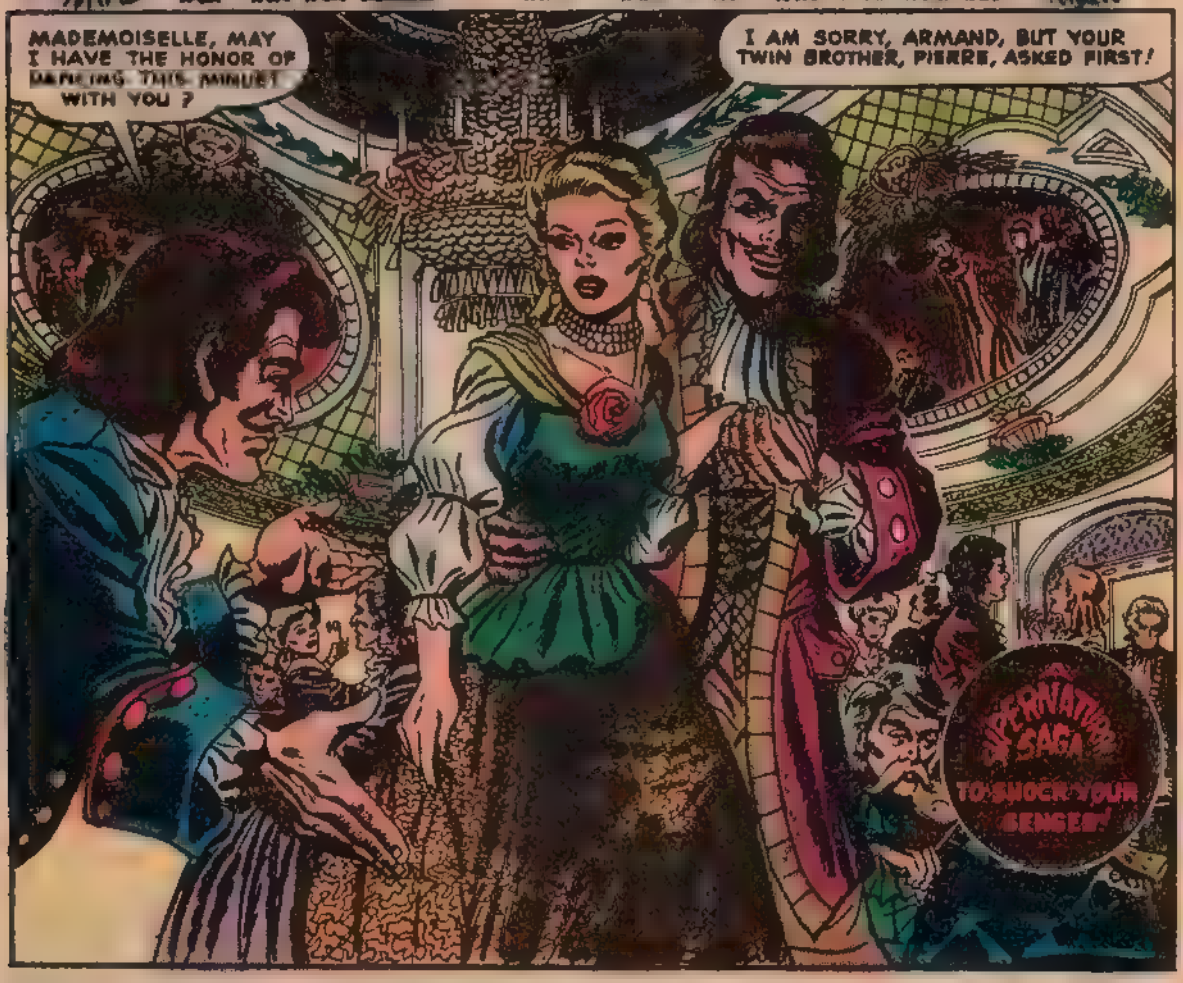
IT'S ALL MY FAULT, DARLING! I FORGOT TO TELL VINCENT! FORGIVE ME!
OF COURSE! THE MILLION DOLLAR DEAL I JUST PUT ACROSS HAS LEFT ME ALL UPSET! AND THOSE *ACCIDENTS* I'VE BEEN HAVING HAVEN'T HELPED! I NEED A VACATION!

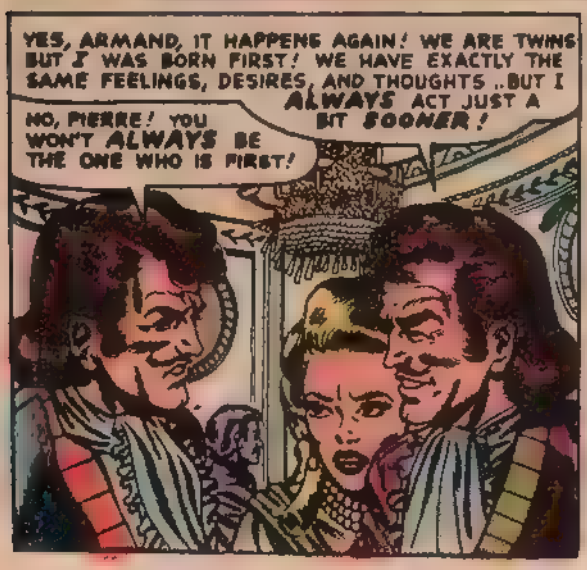
I'VE ALREADY MADE PLANS! WE LEAVE TOMORROW FOR A WONDERFUL VACATION NEAR CANADA!
GREAT! YOU THINK OF EVERYTHING, LORNA! AND TELL OUR CHAUFFEUR I'M SORRY I LOST MY TEMPER!
LATER THAT NIGHT...
IS HE ASLEEP?
YES! HE CAN'T HEAR US ANYWAY! HE TAKES OFF HIS HEARING AID WHEN HE GOES TO BED! LET ME IN!
YOU RUINED ANOTHER PERFECT SETUP! WE COULD HAVE REMOVED HIS HEARING AID! AND TOLD THE POLICE HE DIDN'T ANSWER WHEN YOU CALLED OUT!
BUT I COULDN'T HELP IT, LORNA! HE MOVED JUST WHEN I THREW THE KNIFE AT HIS NECK!
YOU'VE FAILED FIVE TIMES! WELL, TOMORROW WHEN WE GET TO THE BOATING RESORT I'M GOING TO KILL HIM MYSELF!
HIS LUCK'S GOT TO GIVE OUT SOON! HOW'RE YOU GOING TO KILL HIM?
AND OUTSIDE VINCENT'S ROOM, ALBERT RUDLEY LISTENED WITH THE VOLUME ON HIS HEARING AID TURNED UP TO ITS HIGHEST POINT...
THE MURDERING DEVILS! SO THEY'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR THOSE "STRANGE ACCIDENTS"!
LIKE THE ROLLERSKATE ON THE STAIRS... I ALMOST BROKE MY NECK...
THAT EXPLODING GUN NEARLY SCARED ME TO DEATH..
THOSE FAULTY BRAKES ON MY NEW CAR LAID ME UP FOR WEEKS—
AND THAT FALLING PIANO WOULD HAVE CRUSHED ME TO MINCEMEAT!
2


KILLING MY HUSBAND WILL BE EASY! AT THE BOATING RESORT I'M GOING TO...
WAIT! SOMEBODY'S LISTENING
NOBODY'S OUT HERE. I MUST BE GETTING JUMPY!
TOMORROW I'LL BE A WEALTHY WIDOW. THEN I'LL BE JUST YOU AND I VINCENT DARLING!
THAT NIGHT ALBERT RUDLEY DID NOT SLEEP...
I DIDN'T MAKE TWO MILLION BUCKS BY BEING STUPID! BUT IF ONLY I COULD HAVE LISTENED A MINUTE LONGER... WONDER HOW SHE PLANS TO KILL ME?
THE NEXT DAY AFTER THEY WERE SETTLED IN THEIR CABINS AT THE BRIGHT HARBOR BOATING RESORT ALBERT RUDLEY TOOK A SMALL BUT DEADLY AMPULE FROM HIS POCKET AND EMPTIED IT INTO LORNA'S COFFEE
YOUR COFFEE IS GETTING COLD LORNA!
WHEN SHE DIVES INTO THE WATER, THIS DRUG WILL PARALYZE HER! SHE'LL SINK LIKE A ROCK!
BE RIGHT THERE ALBERT! THEN I WANT YOU TO TAKE ME FOR A NICE RIDE IN A ROWBOAT
THE COFFEE WAS DELICIOUS! AND NOW FOR A QUIET ROW AWAY FROM EVERYONE!
THAT'S JUST WHAT I HAD IN MIND! GO AHEAD TO THE BOAT! I'LL JOIN YOU IN A MINUTE!
NOW TO TAKE THIS HEARING AID OFF AND LEAVE IT IN THE CABIN!
THEN, HALF AN HOUR LATER, WHEN THERE WERE NO BOATS OR SWIMMING IN SIGHT ..
YES, AND THEN YOU PLAN TO UPSET THE BOAT AND LET ME DROWN! YOU KNOW I CAN'T SWIM A STROKE!
I'M GOING FOR A DIP DEAR

THE INSTANT LORNA HIT THE WATER THE CRAMP-PRODUCING DRUG PARALYZED HER MUSCLES AND SO
HELP! I CAN'T MOVE! HELP!
I'LL TELL THE POLICE I FORGOT MY HEARING AID AND DIDN'T HEAR HER YELL
ALBERT! HELP ME! I- I M C-CAN'T MOVE"
THE PERFECT CRIME AND NO ONE CAN BLAME ME!
HEY! STOP! CAN'T YOU HEAR? LISTEN, YOU FOOL!
SO LORNA WAS GOING TO MURDER ME BY UPSETTING THE BOAT? HAH! I WAS TOO CLEVER FOR HER!
...AND THEN ALBERT RUDLEY MADE A STARTLING DISCOVERY
EH? WHAT'S WRONG? THIS BOAT'S PICKING UP SPEED! I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
GOOD HEAVENS! LORNA! SO THAT'S WHAT SHE PLANNED.
YAAAAA!
WHAT A SHAME ALBERT RUDLY COULDN'T HEAR THE SOUND OF THE RUSHING WATER!!
THE END

THE TWIN!


MADEMOISELLE, MAY I HAVE THE HONOR OF DANCING THIS MINUET WITH YOU ?
I AM SORRY, ARMAND, BUT YOUR TWIN BROTHER, PIERRE, ASKED FIRST!
SUPERNATURAL SAGA
TO SHOCK YOUR SENSES!


YES, ARMAND, IT HAPPENS AGAIN! WE ARE TWINS BUT I WAS BORN FIRST! WE HAVE EXACTLY THE SAME FEELINGS, DESIRES, AND THOUGHTS ..BUT I ALWAYS ACT JUST A BIT SOONER!
NO, PIERRE! YOU WON'T ALWAYS BE THE ONE WHO IS FIRST!

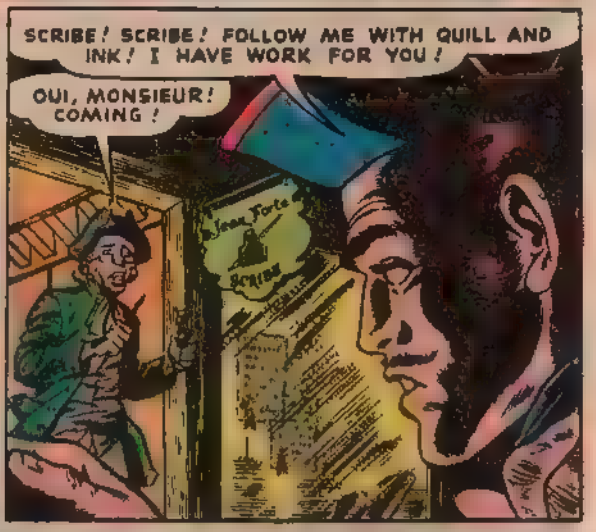
RESTLESS AND FRUSTRATED BY HIS TWIN BROTHER'S ACTION, ARMAND STALKED THE DOCKS OF LE HAVRE AS DAWN BROKE ON A WINTRY MORNING OF 1756

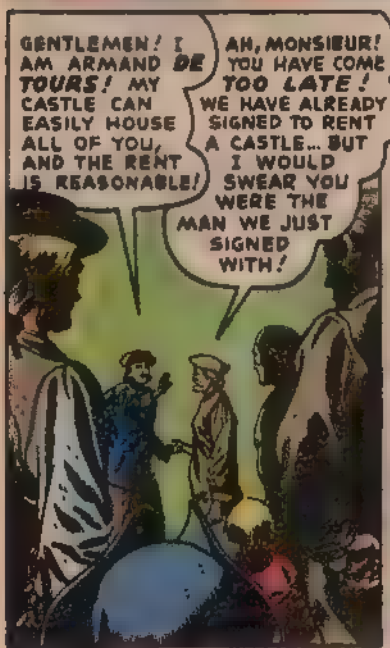
CARGO SHIPS FROM THE INDIES! THEY MUST HAVE JUST ARRIVED! IF NO ONE ELSE HAS SEEN THEM, I CAN BUY UP THEIR SPICE CARGO AND MAKE A FAST KILLING ON THE PARIS MARKET!

CAPTAIN! HOW MUCH SPICE IS IN YOUR HOLDS? I'LL BUY IT ALL... IF THE PRICE IS RIGHT!
BUT, MONSIEUR, YOU ALREADY HAVE BOUGHT IT ALL!

YOU'RE MISTAKEN! I JUST CAME HERE!
BUT I RECOGNIZE YOUR FACE!
NO, CAPTAIN! IT WAS I WHO JUST BOUGHT THE SPICE! MY TWIN HAD THE SAME IDEA BUT I ARRIVED FIRST!

A WEEK LATER, ARMAND SAW POLISH EXILES FLEEING INTO PARIS...
MY CASTLE NEAR TOURS IS OF NO USE TO ME... I'M ALWAYS HERE! BUT THOSE REFUGEES ARE IN NEED OF A HOME! IF I RENT IT TO THEM, I'LL MAKE A FORTUNE!


SCRIBE! SCRIBE! FOLLOW ME WITH QUILL AND INK! I HAVE WORK FOR YOU!
OUI, MONSIEUR! COMING!
Jean Forte
SCRIBE


GENTLEMEN! I AM ARMAND DE TOURS! MY CASTLE CAN EASILY HOUSE ALL OF YOU, AND THE RENT IS REASONABLE!
AH, MONSIEUR! YOU HAVE COME TOO LATE! WE HAVE ALREADY SIGNED TO RENT A CASTLE... BUT I WOULD SWEAR YOU WERE THE MAN WE JUST SIGNED WITH!

SAME IDEA, BUT AGAIN I GOT THERE FIRST, ARMAND! BUT THAT'S WHAT COMES OF BEING THE FIRST TWIN!
YOU!

N-NO, ARMAND!
STOP!
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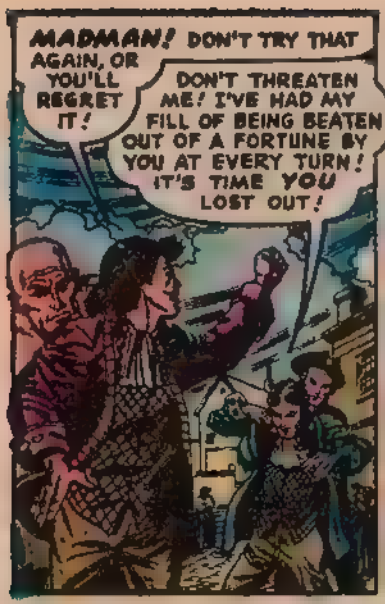
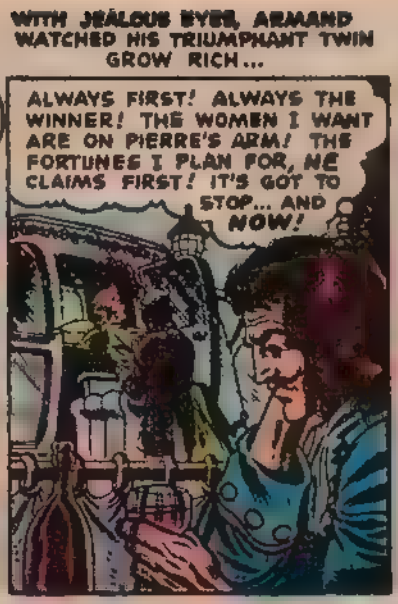
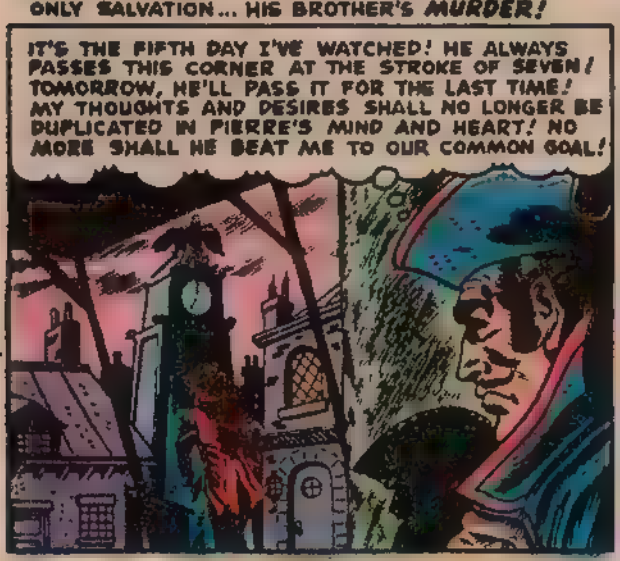

MADMAN! DON'T TRY THAT AGAIN, OR YOU'LL REGRET IT!
DON'T THREATEN ME! I'VE HAD MY FILL OF BEING BEATEN OUT OF A FORTUNE BY YOU AT EVERY TURN! IT'S TIME YOU LOST OUT!


WITH JEALOUS EYES, ARMAND WATCHED HIS TRIUMPHANT TWIN GROW RICH...
ALWAYS FIRST! ALWAYS THE WINNER! THE WOMEN I WANT ARE ON PIERRE'S ARM! THE FORTUNES I PLAN FOR, HE CLAIMS FIRST! IT'S GOT TO STOP... AND NOW!

FATHER GAVE US TWIN DAGGERS WHEN WE REACHED MANHOOD! HERE'S WHERE PIERRE GETS A SECOND DAGGER!


CAREFULLY, ARMAND PLANNED WHAT SEEMED HIS ONLY SALVATION... HIS BROTHER'S MURDER!
IT'S THE FIFTH DAY I'VE WATCHED! HE ALWAYS PASSES THIS CORNER AT THE STROKE OF SEVEN! TOMORROW, HE'LL PASS IT FOR THE LAST TIME! MY THOUGHTS AND DESIRES SHALL NO LONGER BE DUPLICATED IN PIERRE'S MIND AND HEART! NO MORE SHALL HE BEAT ME TO OUR COMMON GOAL!

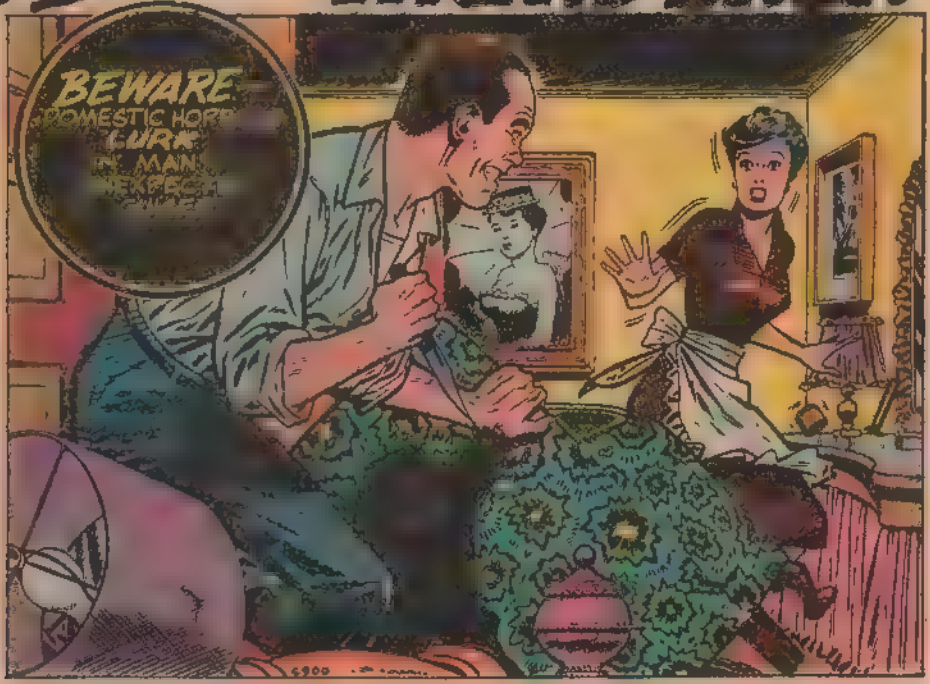
THE NEXT MORNING, ARMAND WAITS WITH LETHAL INTENT...
IT JUST STRUCK SEVEN! I HEAR FOOTSTEPS! PIERRE COMES! ANOTHER SECOND, AND VICTORY IS MINE!
CLOP
CLICK
CLOP

BUT SUDDENLY, AS ARMAND BROUGHT BACK HIS DAGGER TO STRIKE, HE FELT A COLD, PIERCING PAIN STAB INTO HIS CHEST...
AIEEEEE!

P-PIERRE! YOU HAD THE SAME IDEA!
YES, MY FOOLISH BROTHER... AND STILL FIRST!
THE END

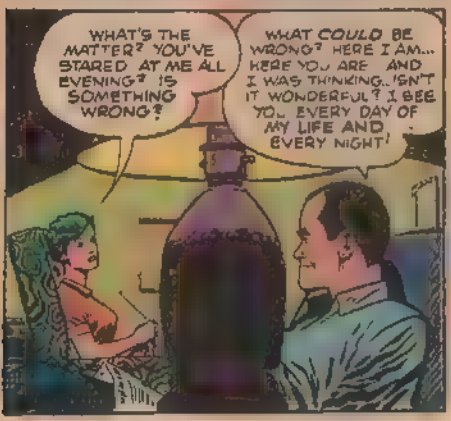
WE KNOW YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BORED BY THE CREEPY CAPERS OF THE CHARACTERS IN THIS BOOK... BUT STEADY EDDIE IS BORED... WITH MARION'S SMILE, MARION'S COOKING... BUT MOST OF ALL WITH MAID MARION'S MEMORY! TOO BAD EDDIE'S MEMORY WASN'T SO GOOD... FOR THERE WAS ONE DAY HE SHOULD HAVE REMEMBERED!

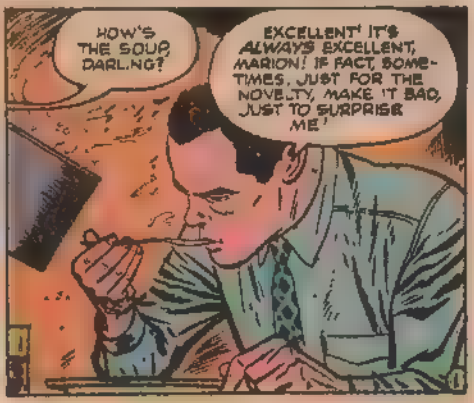
MARION'S MURDERER



EDWARD ERRAUT WAS AT THE POINT OF MURDERING HIS WIFE! IN FACT HE'D BEEN AT THAT POINT FOR SOME SIX YEARS, THOUGH MARION ERRAUT NEVER SUSPECTED IT.

ACTUALLY IT WASN'T THE DAYS EDWARD ERRAUT MINDED SO MUCH . BECAUSE HE WASN'T HOME . BUT THE NIGHTS ALWAYS BROUGHT EDWARD HOME AND HOME MEANT MARION AND MARION MEANT BOREDOM!

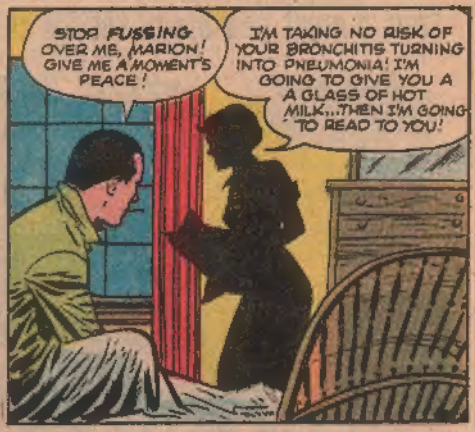

WHAT'S THE MATTER? YOU'VE STARED AT ME ALL EVENING? IS SOMETHING WRONG?
WHAT COULD BE WRONG? HERE I AM... HERE YOU ARE AND I WAS THINKING... ISN'T IT WONDERFUL? I SEE YOU EVERY DAY OF MY LIFE AND EVERY NIGHT!


HOW'S THE SOUP, DARLING?
EXCELLENT! IT'S ALWAYS EXCELLENT, MARION! IF FACT, SOMETIMES, JUST FOR THE NOVELTY, MAKE IT BAD, JUST TO SURPRISE ME!

MARION THOUGHT EDWARD HAD SUCH A SENSE OF HUMOR! IN FACT, NOBODY SUSPECTED WHAT WAS SEETHING WITHIN EDWARD! OUTWARDLY, HE SEEMED SUCH A NICE HUSBAND...

TERRIFIC CANAPES, MARION!
WONDERFUL!
THAT'S NOTHING! WAIT TILL YOU TASTE MARION'S PIGS-IN-BLANKETS! WHEN IT COMES TO PIGS-IN-BLANKETS, MARION IS THE WORLD'S BEST!

GOOD AS MARION WAS AT PIGS-IN-BLANKETS, SHE WAS SUPREME AT CATERING TO EDWARD WHEN HE WAS SICK...


STOP FUSSING OVER ME, MARION! GIVE ME A MOMENT'S PEACE!
I'M TAKING NO RISK OF YOUR BRONCHITIS TURNING INTO PNEUMONIA! I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU A A GLASS OF HOT MILK...THEN I'M GOING TO READ TO YOU!

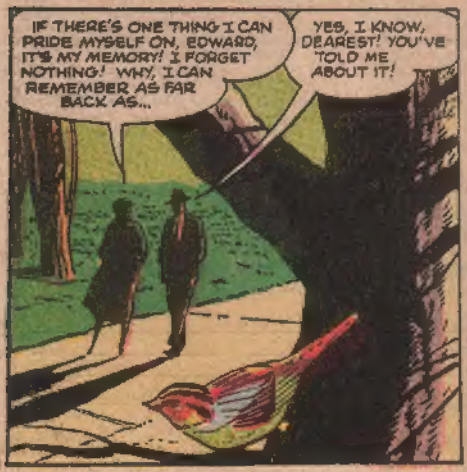
BUT I WANT TO READ TO MYSELF!
I WON'T HEAR OF IT! YOU'LL STRAIN YOUR EYES! NOW BE A GOOD BOY, EDWARD!
YES, MARION!
MAGNUS THE CHEFICANT

BUT IF THERE WAS ONE THING EDWARD RESENTED MOST ABOUT MARION, IT WAS HER AMAZING MEMORY...

WHOSE BIRTHDAY OR ANNIVERSARY ARE WE CELEBRATING NOW?
YOUR BROTHER JIMMY'S... HIS FOURTEENTH! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN! I DECLARE, EDWARD ERRAUT, YOU'D FORGET YOUR HEAD, IF IT WASN'T FIXED TO YOUR SHOULDERS!

TO TELL THE TRUTH, EDWARD ERRAUT WAS BEGINNING TO LOSE HIS HEAD... BUT NOT OVER HIS FAULTY MEMORY...

GOODNESS SAKES, EDWARD! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THE MILLIKENS? WE MET THEM FIVE YEARS AGO AT EASTER!
OH, YES...ER... OF COURSE! HOW DO YOU DO!


IF THERE'S ONE THING I CAN PRIDE MYSELF ON, EDWARD, IT'S MY MEMORY! I FORGET NOTHING! WHY, I CAN REMEMBER AS FAR BACK AS...
YES, I KNOW, DEAREST! YOU'VE TOLD ME ABOUT IT!

BUT I HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING YET!
YOU WILL! YOU'VE SAID IT A HUNDRED TIMES OVER! YOU SAY EVERYTHING A HUNDRED TIMES OVER! THAT'S BECAUSE YOU HAVE SUCH A WONDERFUL MEMORY! YOU REPEAT EVERYTHING BECAUSE YOU FORGET NOTHING!

SENSE OF HUMOR, YOU SEE! THERE WAS MORE AND MORE SUCH HUMOR AS TIME WENT BY...
YOU ALWAYS SAID YOU HAD THE MEMORY OF AN ELEPHANT! I SUPPOSE YOU'RE EATING NOW TO RESEMBLE AN ELEPHANT!
DON'T BE UNKIND, EDWARD! YOU KNOW I LOVE CHOCOLATES! IT'S MY ONE FAILING!
ONE FAILING? THE IDIOT...SHE'S A MASS OF FAILINGS! I HATE HER! I HATE HER GOODNESS AND KINDNESS! I HATE HER HOVERING OVER ME... MOTHERING ME...SMOTHERING ME!
IF ONLY I WERE FREE OF HER... NEVER TO COME HOME TO HER... NEVER TO SEE HER SMILING, STUPID, SOLICITOUS FACE AGAIN! NEVER TO HEAR HER WHEEDLING VOICE!
NEVER TO EAT HER ROTTEN SOUP OR TASTE HER SICKENING PIGS-IN-BLANKETS! NEVER TO HEAR ABOUT HER MEMORY AGAIN! WHAT A WONDERFUL WORD NEVER IS! WHAT FINALITY IN IT!
ONE DAY, FIVE WEEKS LATER, FOLLOWING HUNDREDS OF HOURS OF PLANNING, AND GROWLING AND BROODING, EDWARD DECIDED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT FINALITY...
I'VE TOLD EVERYBODY AT THE OFFICE THAT MARION DECIDED TO TAKE A LONG TRIP, A VACATION, WITH MY RELUCTANT CONSENT, OF COURSE!
I'LL WAIT PATIENTLY FOR LETTERS...BUT NO LETTERS WILL COME! I'LL GET WORRIED! FRIENDS WILL ADVISE ME TO GO TO THE POLICE...TO THE MISSING PERSONS' BUREAU!
I'LL GO, OF COURSE, AS A DEVOTED, ANXIOUS HUSBAND SHOULD! BUT THERE'LL BE NO NEWS! THERE'LL BE A COUNTRY-WIDE SEARCH FOR POOR MARION! BUT NOBODY WILL FIND HER!
HOW COULD ANYONE? ALL THE TIME MARION'S BODY WILL BE BURIED IN OUR CELLAR UNDER THE CEMENT OF THE FINISHED BASEMENT!

YES, TONIGHT WAS THE NIGHT! TONIGHT, ALL THE THINKING LAY BEHIND EDWARD! TONIGHT WAS THE NIGHT FOR ACTION...
HAD A HARD DAY AT THE OFFICE, EDWARD?
NOT UNUSUALLY SO, MY DEAR! HOW ABOUT YOU?
OH, JUST ORDINARY! JUST THE REGULAR WASHING AND CLEANING! TELL ME, DARLING...THINK HARD! DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT DAY THIS IS?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, MARION, TODAY, I DO!
Y...YOU DO?
YEP! IT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY OF OUR LIVES! IT'S A DAY I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO FOR YEARS!
ISN'T IT STRANGE! I NEVER POSSAW A DAY LIKE THIS BEFORE I MARRIED YOU! AND YET BEGINNING WITH OUR HONEYMOON...I KEPT THINKING ABOUT THIS DAY EVER SINCE!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, EDWARD! YOU'RE ACTING SO STRANGELY! YOU KEEP SMILING...
WHY SHOULDN'T I SMILE? IT'S THE HAPPIEST DAY OF MY LIFE! I'LL PUT AN END TO THE BOREDOM... THE STUPIDITY OF MY EXISTENCE!
EDWARD! YOU'VE GOT A KNIFE!
SO I HAVE! I'M GOING TO WIPE THAT STUPID SMILE OFF YOUR FACE, MARION! I'LL CUT YOUR MEMORY SHORT...AND YOUR BABBLE...WELL, YOU WON'T BE BABBLING MUCH LONGER!
EDWARD!
IT WON'T DO MUCH GOOD TO SCREAM, MARION! I'M GOING TO BE FREE AGAIN! DON'T RUN! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE ME!
BUT...I...I NEVER HARMED YOU! I WAS ALWAYS GOOD TO YOU...(GASP!)...
TOO GOOD! TOO GOOD... TO LIVE!
EDWARD...NO...NO! W...WAIT, EDWARD... PLEASE!

WAIT! I'VE DONE NOTHING BUT WAIT FOR YEARS... YEARS!
YEARS! YEARS!
THERE! IT'S DONE! NOW TO BURY HER IN THE CELLAR! I'VE GOT TO RIP UP THE FLOORING AND BURY HER UNDER THE CEMENT!
I WON'T PUT ON THE CELLAR LIGHT! I'LL BE DOWN THERE QUITE AWHILE, AND I DON'T WANT THE NEIGHBORS TO SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL...LIKE CELLAR LIGHTS BURNING FOR HOURS!
I CAN SEE WHAT I'M DOING BY FURNACE LIGHT! AFTER I GET HER DOWN HERE, I'LL PULL UP THE RUG AND BURY IT WITH HER! THAT'LL TAKE CARE OF THE BLOOD STAINS!
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY! SURPRISE! SURPRISE!
CLICK!
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY, DEAR MARION AND EDWARD...HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO YOU!
LOOK AT HIM STAND THERE! THE GALLANT HUSBAND... WON'T EVEN LET HIS WIFE WALK DOWN THE STEPS!
CARRYING THE OLD GAL ACROSS THE THRESHOLD, EDDIE?
IT'S A SURPRISE PARTY! MARION PLANNED IT!
LOOK AT HIM! HE FORGOT! IT'S YOUR WEDDING ANNIVERSARY, YOU LUCKY STIFF!
THE END